

The President's Daily Brief

28 August 1972

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

In South Vietnam, government troops are continuing to regain territory in Quang Nam Province, but the Communists are preparing for heavier fighting. (Page 1)

Vang Pao's offensive to recapture the Plaine des Jarres in Laos is encountering its first determined Communist resistance. (Page 2)

The Japanese economy is emerging from its longest postwar slump; the growth rate is expected to reach ten percent by the end of the year. (Page 3)

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VIETNAM

Government troops are continuing to regain territory in Quang Nam Province, but the Communists are preparing for heavier fighting. South Vietnamese forces in Que Son district capital repulsed a series of enemy counterattacks yesterday with the help of heavy air strikes. Last night, however, North Vietnamese troops seized the military compound of the district headquarters in Que Son, according to press reports. A government task force has linked up with advance elements that captured the town on 25 August. The task force has also cleared some of the high ground overlooking Que Son. Substantial Communist artillery fire is being directed against the government's field command at Fire Support Base Baldy, and enemy ground resistance is stiffening as the South Vietnamese near enemy-held Fire Support Base Ross.

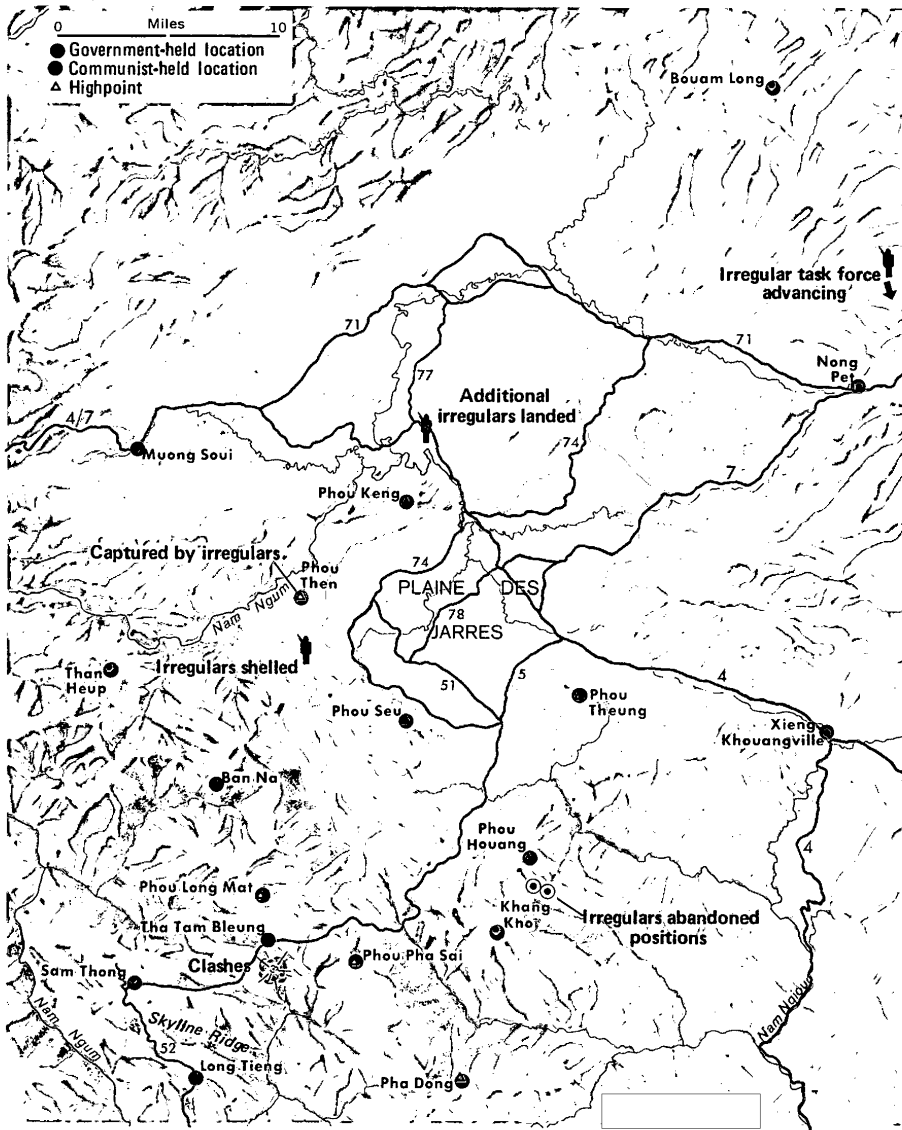
A major Communist supply and assembly area, along with possibly eight tanks, has been observed about ten miles southwest of Que Son. Large amounts of ammunition and foodstuffs are stocked there that are evidently intended to support a major enemy effort in the coastal region.

In Quang Tri Province, sporadic heavy fighting occurred near the east side of Quang Tri City's citadel during the weekend as South Vietnamese Marines pressed their campaign to clear the Communists from this portion of the fortress. Some 2,800 rounds of artillery and mortar fire were directed at government positions in and around the city on 26 August, causing only light losses. Intercepted messages show that the Communists have moved about 7,200 sick and wounded troops northward during the past two months. Most of them--about 4,000--have been detected since mid-July when the current battle for Quang Tri Province intensified.

Fighting elsewhere during the weekend was generally light, but new enemy attacks are expected in the central highlands and in the delta.

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LAOS: PLAINE DES JARRES AREA



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LAOS

Vang Pao's offensive to recapture the Plaine des Jarres is encountering its first determined Communist resistance. North Vietnamese forces shelled and attacked several irregular positions on three sides of the Plaine on 25-26 August. In the most serious action, irregulars were forced to abandon two positions near Phou Houang and are regrouping about three miles to the south. Other sharp clashes occurred near Phou Keng, Phou Then, and Tha Tam Bleung.

Three additional irregular battalions have been airlifted into positions near Phou Keng, north of the Plaine, to reinforce the three battalions that have been stalled there since they were deployed five days ago. The combined force is now moving toward the northern edge of the Plaine.

The government's 15-day-old offensive has made scant progress despite the fact that the Communists offered little resistance until two days ago. Several days of bad weather hampered tactical air support and resupply flights. Improved weather on Saturday, however, enabled the task force moving south from Bouam Long to take Phou Then, a hill overlooking the western edge of the Plaine. Intercepts indicate that the five North Vietnamese regiments on or near the Plaine are closely monitoring the irregulars and are planning continued resistance.

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JAPAN

The Japanese economy is emerging from its longest postwar slump, and the growth rate, already accelerating, is expected to reach ten percent by the end of the year. Japan's trade surplus is continuing to increase and may reach some \$8.7 billion this year compared with \$7.8 billion in 1971. The surplus with the US is increasing at an even faster rate, partly because the Japanese are developing supply sources other than the US to meet their growing needs for such major imports as coal.



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